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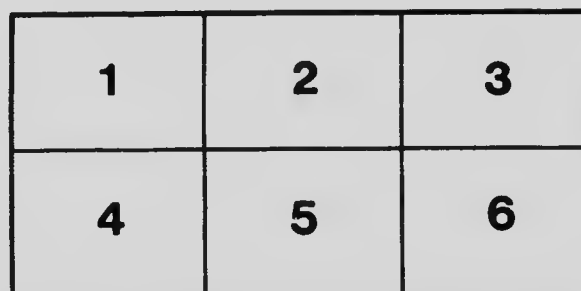
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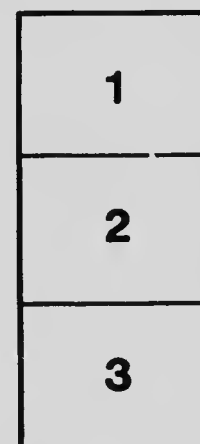
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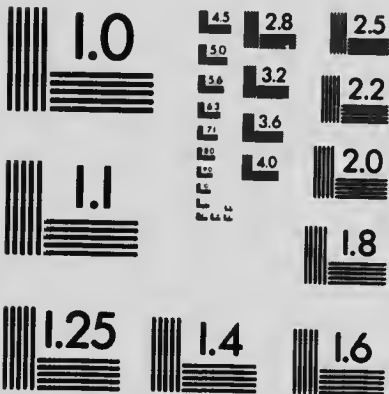
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British Columbian Problems

J. C. HARRIS



"Read not to contradict, nor to believe, but
to weigh and consider.—*Bacon*."

.11
14

DIFFERENTIAL

Calculus

1875



British Columbian Problems

J. C. HARRIS

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The Abuse of the Crown Grant in Mining Property.

I think I may safely affirm that in nearly every mining camp of British Columbia there are a large number (in most camps the larger half) of the mineral claims that are known to be worthy of development and attention lying idle. That the great mining industry of our Province is disastrously affected by this condition of affairs is very evident to any impartial observer.

We have allowed the owners of these claims to obtain crown grants on easy terms, meaning thereby to give them such security of possession that they may raise capital to develop them. Our legislators certainly never intended to grant them such security of possession that they might be held indefinitely shut down, yet this is what has happened.

I wish to examine briefly one important factor that has contributed to this disastrous state of affairs and to outline a plan by which it may be largely remedied.

I believe that the cause may be found in our system of taxing mining property. We will examine our methods by the principles and maxims of those

who have made the most profound study of the laws of taxation.

I approach the subject in an entirely non-partisan spirit. It is fair to all three of the recognized political parties of British Columbia to state that none has offered any practical solution of the difficulty, and it is also fair to our B. C. legislators to state that over most of the world similar conditions prevail. Mexico, where mining has made such great progress, has never granted "patents" or "crown grants." There mining property is held on condition that its holders work it. We cannot begin again, or we should do well to follow such an excellent example, but we can do much to remedy the present evils if we tackle the problem with courage and in the manner laid down by the best authorities on taxation.

Our present method of taxing such property is by what is called the 2 per cent. tax. This tax is levied on the gross output of the mines after the charges for freight and treatment are deducted. There is also a fixed charge of 25 cents per acre on crown granted mineral claims that are unworked.

Adam Smith, the "Father of Political Economy," laid down four principles of taxation, which John Stuart Mill, his great successor, quotes with approval in his "Principles of Political Economy," book 5. chapter 2.

Smith's first principle is:

"The subjects of every state ought to contribute to the support of the government, as nearly as possible in proportion to their respective abilities: that is, in proportion to the revenue which they respectively enjoy under the protection of the state." The 2 per cent. tax violates this principle most flagrantly as is obvious. Suppose two mines, both of which have netted \$100,000.00 as the result of the year's operations, one of them has made \$50,000.00 of profit; the other has just cleared expenses. Both would have to pay \$2,000.00 as mineral tax.

The land tax of twenty-five cents an acre is equally unfair. A mineral claim whose owners would refuse \$50,000.00 for it is taxed at the same rate as one worth \$50.00. It is as if the best lots in the city of Vancouver were taxed at the same rate as lots lying in remote regions where the tram lines do not penetrate.

Smith's second principle is:

"The tax which each individual is bound to pay ought to be certain, and not arbitrary. The time of payment, the manner of payment, the quantity to be paid, ought all to be clear and plain to the contributor and to every other person. When it is otherwise, every person subject to the tax is put more or less in the power of the tax gatherer, who can either aggravate the tax upon any obnoxious contributor, or extort by the terror of such aggravation, some present or perquisite for himself."

I used to think that the 2 per cent. tax complied with this principle. It certainly appears as if it ought to be easy to collect and that evasion would be impossible.

On examining the estimates for last year I found that although the output of minerals on which the tax should be collected amounted to \$18,000,000, minus the cost of freight and treatment at the smelters, our Finance Minister who is so frequently and deservedly complimented on his businesslike methods, had estimated his revenue from this source as if the mineral production were only seven and a half million dollars. So that apparently unless either our mineral returns are absolutely unreliable, or the railways and smelters gobble up about \$9,000,000 of the proceeds of our mines there is serious evasion of this tax.

Smith's third principle of taxation is:

"Every tax ought to be levied at the time, or in the manner, in which it is most likely to be convenient to the contributor to pay it."

There cannot be any exception taken to the present methods on this ground, but it is the least important of the four.

The fourth principle is:

"Every tax ought to be so contrived as both to take out and to keep out of the pockets of the people as little as possible over and above what it brings into the public treasury of the state."

I have pointed out already the enormous apparent loss that occurs in the collection of this tax. This loss may occur in one of two ways, or very possibly in both. Either, many who ought to pay the tax are successfully evading it, or there are enormous commissions paid to the collectors of the tax and the smelter people through whom it is collected.

It seems a simple business to deduct first the freight and treatment from the returns, on a given quantity of ore, and then to take 2 per cent. from the balance and remit this sum to the Government and the rest to the owners of the ore: but the ways of Government officials are notoriously devious and uncertain. When we reflect that it often takes more than 50 cents to wring the iniquitous poll tax of \$3.00 out of the pockets of the working men and land it in the Provincial Treasury, we may imagine serious losses in collecting the Mineral tax.

These four principles of taxation have been supplemented by another which was introduced by Henry George, the greatest political economist America has produced. George's idea, which is influencing the methods of taxation in every progressive country in the world, is briefly this: Taxation should bear more heavily on the natural resources of a country and less heavily on the improvements due to man's skill and enterprise.

Thus, George would not have us tax a piece of land whose owner placed a building or other improve-

ment on it, more highly than a piece of land of originally equal value, whose owner left it to a state of nature.

This is a common sense proposition on which the B. C. Government usually acts, as is proved by their levying a higher rate of taxation on wild land than on improvements. The Scottish Land Values Bill recently passed by the British House of Commons but thrown out by the House of Lords was an attempt to introduce this principle into the Old Country.

Our method of taxing mines is absolutely contrary to this principle. A rich claim lying idle is taxed 25 cents per acre (\$13.00 for a full sized claim), but if the owners attempt to work it and take out ore to net them, say, \$50,000, the tax rises to \$1,000. Why should we fine men for doing the very thing that we all want them to do?

The reason why our statesmen and the legislators of other countries have departed from their guiding principles in dealing with the taxation of mining property is apparent. Mines are not taxed on their value owing to the difficulty of ascertaining their value by ordinary methods. If we could get mining property fairly assessed, I think no one would deny that the fair and proper way would be to tax it on that value.

Our problem then is, how to get mining property fairly assessed. In many countries mines are taxed on their supposed value; they are assessed like other

property by the public assessor. This method is infinitely better than our own, and given a really first class assessor and very frequent revision of values may work fairly well. However capable and honest the public assessor is, his estimates of value cannot be accurate for long.

This is because mining is one of the most speculative of all businesses, which is equivalent to saying that the values of mines are more uncertain than the values of nearly any other form of property. The result of a few days' work often affects the value of a mine by many thousand dollars, either for good or evil. An improvement in the process of treating ore, *e. g.*, the proved success of the electric smelter at Nelson, may convert mines that could only have been worked at a loss into good paying propositions. Improved transportation and the fluctuations of the markets for minerals are only some of the many factors which determine the value of a mine; whilst the discovery of mineral on an adjoining property may convert an almost worthless prospect into an exceedingly valuable one. Is it possible then to get mines duly assessed? I answer yes, and every quotation of mining stock and every deal in mining property proves it. Mines are being constantly valued by their owners and by those who interest themselves to discover their value and if our Government is wise, it will turn to these men to get the necessary assessment made.

Let us carefully consider what could be done in this matter and what effect such legislation as I shall propose will have on mine owners, miners, prospectors and the general public.

First let us suppose our legislature to pass a law abolishing the 2 per cent. tax, the land tax, and the free miner's license and nearly all the other sources of revenue from the mining industry, and in its place requiring all holders of mining property (except newly staked prospects) to themselves assess their property, before a fixed date each year at the price at which they are either willing to sell out or pay taxes: that if some of the owners of mining property refuse to make such assessment, a Government assessor shall make the valuation.

We now come to a proposal which is sure to arouse opposition; I ask you to read it and judge it carefully. It is this:

That at a price, slightly above the value at which the owners have assessed themselves, they should be compelled to sell out to anybody who makes them an offer through the Government agency; the offer to be say, 5 per cent. in excess of the sum at which they have themselves valued the property, and to be accompanied by a substantial deposit on the price of the property as a guarantee of good faith. Thus if you had a piece of mining property lying idle, either a claim, or only a share in a claim, that you valued yourself at \$1,000, and the tax on mineral property

was fixed at 1 per cent., your tax would be \$10. Suppose a purchaser appeared and through the Government made an offer to purchase your property. You would be compelled to accept \$1,050.00 (that is your valuation plus 5 per cent). An owner should have the power to re-assess his property at any time during the year, in addition to his annual assessment. Thus, supposing an owner of a copper mine to have valued his property at \$1,000, and the rate of taxation to be 1 per cent. he would pay \$10.00. Now suppose the price of copper to advance and the demand for such property to increase so that the owner felt that his property was worth \$2,000.00 he would pay an additional \$10.00, thereby increasing his assessment to what he felt was the value of his holding. At the annual revision he would have again to re-assess his property, which would very possibly have fallen in value or have risen still further. The owners of property that is being worked would require further protection, or they might be robbed of any fortune that their industry had earned. They should be allowed to re-assess their property even after an offer had been made, but this privilege should be limited, and there should be a heavy tax of at least 10 per cent. on any such increase, otherwise there would be nothing to prevent mine owners from systematically under-valuing their property.

The idea of compulsory purchase strikes terror into the hearts of many with whom I have discussed

this matter; and to be compelled to accept even more for their property than they have themselves declared to be its just value seems a frightful hardship. I admit that I hold somewhat lax views on what are called the "sacred rights of property," and to me there is no private right that is a public wrong. I am comforted in my opinions by the sentiments of many eminent men, I might say all the eminent men who have written on the subject of property. Men as diverse in their points of view as Mill and Disraeli, Herbert Spencer and the present Bishop of London, all are agreed that the only defence of private property is that it is an institution for the public benefit. Let me quote the wise saying of that great conservative historian and philosopher, William Hartpole Lecky (*Democracy and Liberty*, Chap. 2, under the heading "Opinion of Mill"). He writes: "I have no wish to put forward any extreme or exaggerated view of the sanctity of landed property. In my own opinion the Legislature has a perfect right, if the public welfare requires it, to take possession of all such property, and to sell or hire it on such terms as it pleases, on the single condition of giving full compensation to the owners."

Our Government in many ways is acting up to this reasonable and moderate philosophy and in some ways goes far beyond it. The owner of an orchard is compelled to spray his trees if necessary, and if the trees are found to be so badly infected as to be

a menace to other orchards, the Government will have them destroyed at the owner's expense and without paying a cent of compensation.

No doubt, many will object, that a mine if shut down is no danger or nuisance to anybody but the owners. I have lived in the Slocan for many years, and have seen many homes deserted because the mines where the miners should have been working were shut down. Some great legal battles have been fought, over Slocan mines, and no doubt "glorious victories" won, but whilst the owners of the Slocan Star and the Reco have squabbled so gloriously, Sandon has well-nigh perished.

It will be argued that the mine owners have not objected to the present system, and this is true. In the first place no reasonable alternative proposal has been suggested hitherto. In the second place the mine owners are no more interested than the general public. I know that the owners of the most disease-infected orchards are about the last to raise a kick and ask for a Government inspector; and it will be the same way with the owners of these derelict mines. My system would be just. The tax would be on the value of the property, and it would vary and rise and fall in accordance with the fortunes of the mining industry.

I have argued the matter with many mine owners and miners and prospectors, and they have stated what they have imagined their grievances would be.

I have often been able to show to these nervous objectors that their taxes would be reduced under this system of self-assessment. To others I have brought home the fact that they were holding far too much property, and that the excess was a positive curse both to themselves and to the country. The system I recommend would be a great change; many object that the change is altogether too great, and that though I have pointed out a greatly improved plan, it is too late now to adopt it. We will briefly consider how the change can be made without undue shock to the nervous systems of the investing public; for a wise statesman avoids as far as possible even the appearance of evil, and change of any sort appears evil to many.

The present system being morally and economically unjustifiable should be swept away, and the new system should be introduced in the following manner.

Holders of mining property should be offered the choice of one of two methods. Either to assess themselves in the manner I have described, when of course they would have to accept the conditions of compulsory sale, or they might be assessed by a Government assessor in the ordinary manner. They could then hold their property just as other property is held on condition of paying the taxes. I would allow no appeal to any court of revision from the public assessor's decision. If the owners felt that

their property was over-assessed they should be allowed to adopt the alternative course and fix their assessment at the figure they thought it was worth, with the penalty of having to sell it, at slightly above their estimate. This plan would virtually make of the Government a cheap and convenient agency for the transfer of mining property, and I feel sure that many would gladly avail themselves of it.

The public assessor would have to be a first rate man and he should revise his assessment annually. This would cost money, and therefore it would be only fair to those who saved the country this expense by assessing themselves, that they should receive some remission of taxation.

Let me in conclusion sum up the advantages of such a system of taxation:

It would be just. "Righteousness alone exalteth a nation."

It would be most economically collected.

It would be impossible to evade it.

It would bring holders of mining property in close touch with their property.

It would keep men from acquiring more property than they could do justice to.

It would make it expensive for the holders of mineral property to quarrel and thereby tie up the country.

It would enable many small mining deals to be put through with the minimum of expense, and

would save many a 10 per cent. commission to prospectors, etc.

It would bring many an obstinate partner to reason and thereby enable many deals to be put through.

It would assist the Government to decide where roads and trails were needed, by proving where the owners of property had real faith in their holdings.

There is one more consideration. Our present methods leave us absolutely at the mercy of any combination of capitalists that found it to their advantage to tie up our mines. Any syndicate who acquired the controlling interest in the shares of the big copper mines of the Boundary, could close them down indefinitely and hold them by paying a few hundred dollars of taxes annually. To the South of us, our neighbours who mine lead or zinc are busy framing their tariff to keep out the products of our mines. They might easily find more effective means and probably no more expensive a method of ruining our industries. What would our Finance Minister do then, and where would his surpluses have disappeared to?

The subject of mine taxation is a great one. It would be absurd for me to claim that I had devised a perfect scheme, though I believe that I have indicated a greatly improved method. There is urgent need to revise our present methods, and a Royal Commission should be appointed to consider the whole matter.

Our Forests--Their Preservation or Their Destruction.

The average citizen is awaking to the fact that a serious problem lies before the people of this continent, and that the labour of cutting down trees and dragging or floating their trunks to a mill and then sawing them up, does not constitute the whole art of forestry. Up to the present the forest has too often been considered as a nuisance to be got rid of, and the effect that its presence has on the climate and the national disaster that its destruction would cause has not been considered.

Now we realize that huge portions of the prairies will be rendered uninhabitable if the British Columbian forests are destroyed; that our climate will suffer and streams and rivers which should furnish water power in the future will be greatly spoilt for that purpose. A very great responsibility rests on the people of Canada, particularly those dwelling in British Columbia; also there is a great opportunity to shew ourselves worthy of this magnificent country.

In the past our forests have yielded immense revenues to the Government, and they have seemed

so unlimited that as long as our officials could collect stumpage and sell leases it seemed that this might go on indefinitely.

Of recent years timber rights have risen enormously in value and vast areas have been staked and leased, in fact the areas staked have been so large and the output of lumber so great that there has followed a fall in prices. Under the terms of the leases the timber must be cut within twenty years and already there is an outcry and the lease holders are demanding an extension of time so that they may not be compelled to either forfeit their timber by lapse of time, or else butcher the trees and endeavour to dispose of the best of the timber on a glutted market.

The situation is very serious and from the previous records of our legislature the statesmanship that could deal with it effectually, will be wanting.

The fact that the world's supply of merchantable timber is being exhausted is so generally admitted that we need no figures to prove it. Already only a few countries in the world have timber to sell, and the demand is constantly increasing.

If our Legislators were as wise as the men who built up the Standard Oil Co., it would take advantage of the fact that we have a monopoly. That it would be both easy and wise to do so I wish to point out in this essay.

Our present methods of managing our lumbering industry are extremely wasteful in many ways. For instance, if our Government does not grant the extension of time which is being asked for by the present holders of timber leases, they will skim off the cream of the logs as cheaply and carelessly as possible, and then abandon the leases: the brush will be left, also the second class timber and the timber on the less accessible benches and hill sides, awaiting the inevitable bush fires that are bound to follow such work. But suppose that the Government accede to the request of the holders of these timber limits and grant an indefinite extension of their leases. Let us also suppose that the Government make so just a bargain with the lease holders that the value of their holdings is not increased unduly by the extension. What will be the result? Certain evils will be avoided, probably. The timber will not be sacrificed in such a reckless manner, but the time will come when each lease or rather group of leases will be exhausted, when there will not be left a sufficient value of timber on the limits to make it worth while to their owners to spend money in taking care of them. Then will follow the bush fires, and they will spread into the adjacent timber and far beyond.

This is the fatal defect in any system of leasing, inherent to it and inseparable from it. Our forests should be handled on the principles which govern a great estate. They should be so developed and

exploited as to yield a great and increasing return in timber, and not handed over to a few men to destroy. In fact we should adopt the policy of a good farmer as opposed to the methods of a pirate or a highwayman. But some will say, "Have we not got fire wardens to prevent bush fires and are they not doing good work?" We have the wardens certainly, and I am glad to testify to the good work they are doing, may their numbers increase; but they will never prevent all the fires. These wardens are public officials, paid by us to protect the forests which are largely private property. If the Province had retained its forests, our public servants would have been engaged in protecting public property.

The present method of leasing, results in other serious losses so that neither the logging nor the milling is often done to the best advantage. And again in disposing of the product the methods used are out of date and result in difficulty and waste which we may safely affirm the managers of the Standard Oil Co. would avoid.

On most of our rivers there are several mills more or less advantageously placed, and a good deal of unnecessary sorting of logs has to be done. What we want are a few large mills thoroughly equipped with the machinery for manufacturing all the by-products to best advantage, so placed as to handle the entire output of timber in each section. Again we have been so anxious to prevent our millmen from

combining to fix prices and regulate the output, that we have forced them to sell their product independently; consequently the expense of marketing their product is enormously increased, and ultimately the public have to stand the extra cost. A strong monopoly like one of the great railways, would insist on cash payments. Our poor competing lumbermen have to sell as best they can and often to take a big risk of not being paid. When a boom like the recent one in the North-West collapses it catches some even of our best men short of cash. Thus we vindicate competition at the expense of common sense.

What can our Government do? It can become the monopoly and reap the advantages of a well worked monopoly. It can buy up the limits at a fair valuation. It can prevent the present holders from asking too much. First, by enforcing the conditions of the leases strictly; secondly, by wisely applying its powers of taxation. It should pay no fancy prices for any property but it should be strict and just. Having acquired the monopoly the Government would have an immense but comparatively simple business on its hands.

It should first endeavour to make the monopoly as complete and World-embracing as possible by proposing to the other countries who have timber to sell that they imitate its good example, and also suggesting a conference to define their markets and prevent any overlapping and cutting of prices. The

advantages of the scheme would be so overwhelming that we need not doubt that the majority would join the combine. If they would not do so, we need not worry. Our monopoly of sufficient markets is already complete and secure.

I do not wish to under-estimate the difficulties or to deny that it would require first rate men to manage it. But a monopoly has advantages that most of our struggling business men will admit. The management of the Standard Oil Co. is not worried by the accumulation of old stocks; by the glutting of markets and unexpected developments owing to the manoeuvres of rivals.

Having acquired the monopoly, the managers of the public forests should add to the cost of cutting and manufacturing the trees into the various products, the cost of preserving and developing the forest. The products should be shipped from the nearest point of supply and there should be cash on delivery with each order. We should certainly live up to the standards of Timothy Eaton & Co., in this matter. The forests should be scientifically opened up by experts, and permanent roads and railroads built for the economical handling of the product through the years to come. The Government should pay good wages to the men that it employed and provide good accommodation for them. It should employ a vast number of men and keep the forests in splendid condition, but it should insist on a high

standard of work combined with short hours. Such a monopoly would be able to afford its employees a day of rest on the Sabbath, and see that there was accommodation provided so that they might spend the day in a decent fashion. It should fix such prices as would amply pay for all this work, but it should not attempt to make such profits as would enable the rest of us to live by sweating the lumber jacks.

The Government should also endeavour to arrange the work as far as possible so that the logging might be done in the summer and the manufacturing in the winter, so as to counteract as far as possible the unfortunate lack of employment during the winter in Canada. But this is Socialism, some of my critics will exclaim. It certainly is, but, my good friends, so is your Public School System, which makes many of my reluctant bachelor friends contribute to the education of my children, and now even your conservative Government has undertaken to provide school books free of cost. Will you abolish the Government post office and our public schools, or will you support Mr. Borden in his demand for the nationalization of our railways? The Government of the United States is tackling its forest problem in good earnest but not a moment too soon. May I refer my readers to an article entitled "Notes on our Forest Service" in that splendid publication, "The National Geographic Magazine," from which I quote the following:—

"In the National forests of the U. S. A. the Forest Service Department to protect and develop the forests during the past year, did work which included 3,400 miles of trails, 3,200 miles of telephone line, 100 miles of wagon road, 40 miles of fire line, 250 bridges, 550 cabins and barns and 600 miles of pasture and drift fences." Owing to its efforts "relatively little damage was done to the National Forests at a time when the air was thick with smoke from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast."

"This problem of the forests is intimately bound up with our land question. We have allowed vast areas of timber to be staked, regardless of the fact that many of the limits contain valuable agricultural land, and that it would be greatly to the interest of the country that such lands should be cleared and occupied. Several of the delegates to the Convention of the Central Farmers' Institute, 1909, assured me that the staking of timber had gone to such an extent on Vancouver Island that there is now no possible land open for settlement on the Island, except on such terms as the speculators holding these lands shall decide: the same conditions are true of many parts of the mainland. The Government are energetically and successfully advertising the Province by means of its fruit exhibits, etc., and great numbers are preparing to emigrate to this grand country, but if they apply to our Agent-General in London, Eng., and ask him where they can get land from the Gov-

ernment, such as the Government literature would lead them to expect, he must tell them frankly as an honest man that no such land can be obtained. Like Esau we have sold our birthright for a mess of pottage."

Civil Service Reform.

Rightly or wrongly, the general public is becoming more and more inclined to turn to "The Government," and to use governmental agencies in the regulation and transaction of its business.

Herbert Spencer denounced "The Coming Slavery" and upheld a pure individualism as against the encroachments of the State with a power of knowledge and authority that will probably never be repeated, but he was powerless to arrest the movement, though the value of his and similar criticism has been immense.

"We are all Socialists today," exclaimed Sir William Vernon Harcourt, Chancellor of the Imperial Exchequer, and a mighty leader of Liberalism in the "Old Country," and this is a simple scientific fact that might as well be accepted. We are not all the same sort of Socialists, nor to the same degree do we become possessed of the Socialistic spirit,—that "Fellowship" which William Morris spoke of,—that "Spirit" which was infused in Christ's life and teachings, and without which we are "none of His."

Having convicted the vast majority of my fellow-citizens of Socialism and assuring them that they will find themselves in most excellent company, let us examine our governmental agencies to see how they may be improved and fitted for the immense duties which you and I, my readers, are most assuredly about to thrust upon them.

The question is vital to progress; the Civil Service is the foundation upon which our greatest hopes for the future must be built. If it is rotten and inefficient, we shall hesitate to give our affairs into its hands, and there is much work that can only be properly performed by its agency.

We must build up confidence in our Government, which is to say that the prosperity and happiness of the future, probably the very life of the "white civilization" depends on the public spirit, intelligence and honesty of the average citizen: we must be honest to survive,—we must be gentlemen to co-operate.

To attract the best possible men to enter the public service is our first duty, and I am thankful to say that the problem is receiving the earnest consideration of leaders of public opinion throughout the Dominion.

Officials are not like poets,—they are made, not born. The decent boy who would become a reliable book-keeper or bank clerk will turn into the capable keeper of public accounts, the man who has organ-

izing and managing ability will use it in the public service if we offer him fair inducements, and can guarantee him fair treatment. The public, in some of the cities in Britain, are being served by men who could get higher salaries from private corporations; they prefer the public service. We may suppose that Lord Kitchener's power of organization and other splendid talents could command higher pay than he gets in his official capacity, but we should be surprised if he resigned to become general manager of a great railway company.

We shall assuredly need to build up an efficient Civil Service in Canada, and establish it so that the unclean hands of the party politicians will be kept off our public servants. I wish here to make a suggestion of a first step which would in my opinion do much to protect both our candidates for Parliament and our present public servants.

I would make it compulsory that when a public official is dismissed, the reason for doing so must be published in the "Gazette" by the person who is responsible for his dismissal. This would act both as a punishment to the wrong-doer, and as a great protection to the officials. If the dismissal was for a trivial matter, merely to make way for a political favorite, the affair could be exposed by the one dismissed and his friends. If the charge was a false one, the accused could have recourse to the law courts.

The average Parliamentary candidate is beset by men who are after jobs; he would be protected from this most corrupting influence to a great extent by the fact that he could not promise a job unless he could get the present occupant turned out on a decent pretext.

By this simple enactment I believe that a flood of light would be thrown on one of the dark places in politics, and that even as daylight and fresh air are the most potent agents in bringing about a sanitary condition in our homes and cities, so also the ever-lurking bacillus of official corruption can be kept in check by the purifying action of public opinion.

It may be claimed that such a procedure would often be too harsh, and that the complete exposure of a first offence in some official would blast his career through life. The Government official who had to take action would have to exercise his discretion in the matter. If the culprit admitted his offence, and his superior felt that it was not necessary in the public interest that the facts be published, he could ask the offender to resign.

How imminent a danger this corruption of the public service is, and how rapidly it may spread may be learnt by reading the chapter in 'Democracy and Liberty,' entitled "The Spoils System."

May I take the opportunity of impressing on our citizens the advantage of reading the best books by the highest authorities on all social matters and on

both sides of each question? Such books I have found intensely interesting; they are not so difficult to understand, nor so hard to read as many books by inferior authorities, as the advantage of clear thinking, wide knowledge and sympathy and noble devotion to truth is reflected in the clear, concise style of such writers.

I by no means wish to imply that the simple enactment of such a regulation as I have suggested would work the miracle of reforming our Civil Service. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty" and the state of any country where the citizens neglect their public duties and responsibilities will be increasingly unhappy. To my mind the extent to which the principles of Socialism can be successfully carried in any country will for all time depend on the public spirit, honesty, and gentlemanliness of its citizens, and that even if the substance of Government ownership were carried by popular vote without the spirit which should animate it, we should have made no advance in human happiness.

There will also need to be a thorough training given to our public servants, and an efficient Civil Service slowly built up. In this connection there is a danger of the difficulties of the task driving the public to the expedient of delegating their duties and responsibilities to commissions, and then retiring to sleep whilst these commissioners do their work. I remember the weighty words of one of Britain's

greatest statesmen, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, "Good government is no substitute for self-government."

We farmers are already being served by Government officials, both in the Dominion and Provincial Departments who no politician would venture to meddle with. We know them as our staunch, self-sacrificing friends and would uphold them against any corrupt influences.

Let the general public take the keen interest that the farmers take in these officials, and the end of political corruption and the dawn of a new era of hope such as old Earth has never known, will arise.

Betting on Election.

The recklessness with which the gravest charges are hurled about by all political parties, the systematic abuse of opponents, and the absolute disbelief that public matters can be conducted without "graft" are the most conspicuous phenomena in public life on this Continent.

This state of affairs is not found to anything like the same extent in many other countries, though there political feeling runs equally high. The consequences, both to the individual politician and to the state, are so serious that we may well turn our attention to the problems they present.

Honesty is so essential a condition of progress, that the conduct of the recent Dominion general election throughout Canada cannot but have had a disheartening effect on all those who have taken a deep interest in the country's welfare.

"The love of money is the root of all evil,"—that this is so in our political life no one can doubt: that we can do much to diminish its evil effects by wise legislation is my firm belief.

It was with the object of dealing with one phase of this question and suggesting a simple remedy that

I addressed a letter to the *Daily News* of Nelson, of which the following is an almost exact copy. The letter was duly received as was proved by their acknowledging the receipt of a subscription which was enclosed with it. The Editor, however, was so busy pulling motes out of the eyes of the Government at Ottawa that he did not deem the matter of sufficient importance to publish my letter.

The Editor Nelson *Daily News*.

Sir,—Your columns have recorded on several occasions various bets that have been made on the result of the elections. May I point out what in my opinion is the result of such practices, and how this evil should be dealt with.

All parties are striving with more or less sincerity for purity of elections, and all are agreed that bribery is immoral and disastrous. Now a man who makes a bet on the result of an election is bribed: he is no longer a free and independent elector: if the bet is a small one for an amount that he can afford to win or lose without suffering personally, he has merely sold his soul at a very cheap rate: if the bet is large, he may have got more for his soul, but he begins to be a very dangerous man.

He is a slave to his bet, and we may suspect that he will take any unfair advantage to win. He may, for instance, swear away the character of an opponent, or he may resort to bribery.

Betting on elections should be made illegal, and at the least, anybody who has made a bet on the result of an election should be deprived of his vote.

Public life in Canada is admitted to be disgracefully low; we do not know how to behave as gentlemen, or "play the game," and we are not likely to improve our manners or morals if those who have a direct money interest in the result of the election are to take part and become professional mud slingers.

J. C. HARRIS.

Some time after the above letter was written, the fact that a forged telegram purporting to be the message from the Conservative leader and his pronouncement on the Asiatic question, was laid bare. This most disgraceful episode was hotly discussed in the public press and drew from the Vancouver *Saturday Sunset*, the following comment, which was reproduced in the *Victoria Times*, January 6th, 1909.

"Ugly stories of big bets on the election in Victoria are rife. The word was passed that something was to be done that would defeat Templeman. It is known that many large bets were placed by men who could not afford to lose: loss would, in some cases, have been ruin. What was the nature of the tip? What was going to happen just before the election?"

In the Nelson *Daily News* it was openly stated that as much as \$1,000 was wagered at one bet. Throughout the constituency I heard of men who stood to win or lose very large sums. Are such men fit to be allowed to take part in an election?

The gambling instinct has degraded our sport. Shall we allow it to degrade our public life?

The Socialist Party--Its Slow Growth.

To its friends and to its opponents the slow growth of the Socialist Party has been a matter of some surprise. The confident predictions made by its supporters and the prodigious fears of the more conservative classes, are alike unjustified.

To enquire in what manner has the growth of the party been arrested, and how the earnest and self-sacrificing campaign carried on by its adherents has failed to attract and convert greater numbers to its ranks, is my purpose.

I have lived in an out-of-the-way corner of the Province, and have not had the opportunity of meeting many of the speakers that the Socialist party employs, but I have heard enough, and read enough, of its propaganda to have formed a fair idea of its methods and teachings. I have no doubt of the earnestness, honesty and ability of most of its advocates, but I do doubt if the party's attitude is correct and well-advised in many matters.

My first criticism is, that the party is making a mistake in its attitude towards both of the old political parties. Because a man has not been converted

to Socialism it does not prove that he is a selfish or even an unthinking individual: perhaps the very fact that he is unconverted may be a reflection on the zeal and discretion with which the Socialists have conducted their campaign.

In my experience, the majority of mankind are well-intentioned, and if shown a reasonable course of action, will pursue it. For one who has the devilish ingenuity and malevolence of a Machiavelli there are a very great many who will work hard and successfully in a righteous cause.

It has been my lot to hear and read many attacks on "The Capitalistic Press" by eminently "class-conscious proletarians" whose remarks imply a tremendous conspiracy on the part of the capitalists to deny them reasonable opportunity to air their views. As an impartial onlooker, I have failed to see any sign of such a state of affairs, and it is to the credit of the public press that it has published many important utterances where the interests of the proprietors were certainly affected.

Some time ago, the *Times* of London, England, printed an eight-column letter from Count Tolstoi denouncing private property in land. The same paper published a series of articles by Sidney Webb on the "Decline of the birth-rate," which have been republished as a Socialist tract by the Fabian Society.

I have just read a small and clever book by a Mr. Fox Davies in defence of the House of Lords. The

contents of this book had been offered for publication to both the *Times* and the *Morning Post*. The latter replied: "We simply daren't. There is no half-penny paper in London that dare publish any article that so openly advocates the right of the big man as you have done." A charge that cannot be substantiated destroys the credit of those who make it, and the intemperate attacks on the public press by some Socialists lower their standing in the community.

Another most serious mistake in my opinion is the violent way in which Socialists often attack government institutions; this might be good tactics for the anarchists who hope to destroy all government, but for Socialists who look forward to great extensions of governmental activity, and desire to build up a "Beneficent State," this course of action is suicidal.

Another respect in which the Socialist orator often fails, is in making his schemes appear practicable. The horrors of the present system, its confusion and the degradation alike of the worker and his employer, are ably presented, and also the glorious hopes, comforts and security of the Socialistic state, but a most inadequate ladder is usually presented by which we might advance to it, so that the average citizen feels as if he might as well take a tramcar to the moon.

The attitude of the party towards many other earnest workers is also unwise and ungenerous. I have heard the followers of Henry George hotly denounced as 'Labour fakirs,' etc., by men who

evidently considered that they were of a very superior type. Now I believe that it is a simple fact that the writings of Henry George have done more to advance public thought in the direction of Socialism than those of any other American writer, and great numbers of the leading Socialists the world over have been influenced and aroused by "Progress and Poverty," and "Protection or Free Trade."

The attitude of the Socialist party in this country towards the temperance reformers who have worked so nobly to get a "Local Option" law on the statute books, hardly seems in line with the action of the party elsewhere. In Great Britain a gigantic struggle has been going on during the last few years for the control of the liquor traffic. The Liberal Party which is in power have brought in a Bill to reduce the number of licenses, etc., and the Labour members have supported it through thick and thin, in a manner which put many of the Liberal members to shame. I do not think that any British Labour members see in total abstinence a cure for poverty, but they do see that any advance to the solution of our problems must come as the result of clear thinking, and earnest and united action, and they find the drinking habits of the people the greatest obstacle to the progress of their ideas.

I shall no doubt be accused of "Opportunism" by the advocates of the "Revolution," in big red letters. A complete revolution implies a return to the place

we started from and I would prefer a real and permanent, though slight, advance to much motion without real progress.

We have all seen advertisements of photographic apparatus which state that "you press the button, we do the rest," but we generally fail to find really good artists using such methods, yet the Socialistic state is often presented in some such cut and dried formula, and appears about as real, human and possible as fairy-land.

Many Socialists do not believe that all industries should be nationalized. There are most positive objections to some industries being so treated, and where the danger of a State monopoly would be very great. For instance we do not want a State-owned church, or a State-owned press.

There are many industries which it will be expedient to leave in the hands of private people: we are not likely to clamor for State Dentists or Doctors, neither are the smaller B. C. orchards, nor the small high grade mines likely ever to be operated by the State, though it is probable that their products may be handled and distributed by state agencies in years to come.

Any State will need a number of private institutions to act as safety valves; these private institutions may be made to conform to the public welfare by some such system of taxation as I have already suggested.

I imagine an elastic and eminently plastic state, adapted to supply human needs, guaranteeing to such of its citizens as behave themselves decently great liberty of life and conduct, freeing us by its intelligent regulation, supervision and control of our business from the sordid cares and degrading conditions that at present surround us.

Too many Socialists forget, that as the champions of a great ideal, their conduct is closely watched and criticized; conduct that would be unnoticed in a private individual, may bring down the scorn of a community on a Christian minister. We may easily fritter away our influence for good by carelessness in our lives, speech or conduct.

The Right to Go to Law.

He must be a fortunate individual who has not been dragged into some legal squabble by his neighbours; therefore it is an important question to the average citizen that he should be protected as far as possible from being so maltreated.

It is our duty and privilege to assist in all possible ways in securing the administration of justice, and I have no sympathy with the selfish and lazy person who evades this responsibility, but if we can improve our legal machinery so as to nip many a threatening law-suit in the bud, we shall be well advised to take the necessary measures.

I am proud as a British subject of our courts, and would make no attack on the legal profession, for amongst the lawyers I have many warm friends, but I think they will agree with me that there are far too many of them, and that, for the good of the country, the rising generation had better turn its attention to the productive industries rather than to what are perhaps too truly called "The Professions."

Justice is unfortunately a costly and uncertain commodity, and the public, recognizing this, will often suffer considerable injustice rather than have

recourse to our law courts. The common sentiment has been wittily summed up in the following lines from a little known author:

“For the law always favors rogues, and the reason
on’t is,
That if there weren’t no rogues, there needn’t be
no law.”

There are countries where the hot-headed inhabitants fire pistol bullets at each other to settle their disputes. If only these gentlemen were better shots, and were more certain of killing each other off like the Kilkenny cats, the general public would soon be rid of the nuisance. Unfortunately, the innocent bystander runs most of the risk, and therefore we have wisely enacted a law against the carrying of concealed weapons.

Now what I wish to propose is, that we carry this excellent idea a step further, and deprive our legal warriors of their concealed arms, and prevent as far as possible this firing of costly paper ammunition, which results so frequently in disaster to the innocent, and is a nuisance to all.

We have now a law in Canada for the compulsory arbitration of labor disputes, which will, I believe, work to the immense advantage of the public generally. What I would advocate is the compulsory arbitration of all civil disputes.

It surely should be within the power of a well-meaning legislature to devise a court before which all

legal disputes could be brought free of charge, and before which all lawsuits must be brought before they are allowed into the ordinary courts. I conceive that the Court of arbitration should consist of one or three judges, whose duty it would be to find out in what respects the parties to any dispute felt themselves aggrieved. The arbitrators would then endeavour to point out the law and equity of the case and try to bring the matter to an immediate settlement. This court of arbitration should render its decision, and the party to any dispute who refused to abide by its findings, should be made the plaintiff in any subsequent action taken in the ordinary law courts.

We fruit-growers are compelled to spray our orchards, etc., if any sign of disease is detected. After witnessing the fearful ravages which some law suits have made in certain of our mining towns, I have felt like advocating the spraying and thorough disinfection of some of our mine owners and mine managers, who suffer from what might be called 'Legal Inclinations,' but perhaps they might prefer compulsory arbitration to being sprayed with double strength "Bordeaux mixture" or arsenate of lead.

Public Ownership of Telephones.

Private enterprise has signally failed to deal with the telephone problem of British Columbia, and to-day we stand far behind most countries of the world in this respect. Our politicians have shielded themselves and their utter negligence of the public interests in this important matter behind the physical difficulties, and immense size of our country.

It is true that our Province is large and its population so scattered that the telephone problem, and the road problem, and the public school problem, and the railway problem, are all made intensely difficult.

We have adopted an absurd land system and have allowed speculators everywhere to tie up the country. We build our roads past lands that are lying idle, and our railroads are pushed all over the Province long before they are really needed. A wise Government would have insisted that before they opened up fresh sections of the country, the parts already occupied should be adequately peopled and developed.

As a result we maintain far too many railroads for the population, and because abundant freight is not forthcoming from such a scattered population, our

railways have to charge absurdly high freight rates. The Grand Trunk Pacific was absolutely unneeded, and the people of Canada would have been far better off, if instead of overburdening themselves with that great encumbrance, they had adopted a policy of opening up the lands and resources adjacent to the lines already built.

Canada is now like a big ocean liner that has started on a voyage with the crew of a fishing smack. This incessant craze for opening up new countries and hoping thereby to find prosperity, whilst we allow these absurd conditions to prevail, is like the action of a small boy chasing the tail of the rainbow for the mythical bag of gold.

A railway, unless it is really needed, is a positive source of danger and expense to the country. They have been a most prolific cause of bush-fires, and are a most expensive luxury generally.

I have lived for many years on a piece of land which, owing to its queer situation, has been harder than usual to provide with a road, and each year my piece of road costs me a good deal of labour to maintain, and is a constant nuisance, therefore, the philosophy of roads has been drilled into me by hard experience. There is no farmer in the country who would think his place improved by having an extra mile of useless road between himself and the market or railroad. Why should we adopt a system which

deliberately increases our difficulties by allowing our population to become scattered?

New Zealand has had government-owned telephones for years, and the lines run up into the most remote settlements, but New Zealand also has had a government which has tackled its land problem, and if it has fewer millionaires than we have, so also, I am told, it has fewer unemployed.

By providing an efficient telephone system throughout our rural districts, the Government could do the maximum of good for the minimum of expenditure, and in no way could the public funds be better employed.

I have often wished that some benevolent fairy or genii could remove our Parliament Buildings en masse, members and all, and dump them down in one of our back settlements without telephone or telegraph connection, so that our legislators could realize the position and isolation of the farmers' wives in wet weather.

But is not this grandmotherly legislation? Should not the people be taught to help themselves, and are we not dangerously encroaching on the sacred principles of individualism? My answer is, that the public interest often requires a telephone line where no private company could ever be expected to instal or operate one. It is quite possible, and indeed probable, that a prompt telephone message from the point where the bush-fire originated, that burnt out

Fernie to an active fire warden might have saved that terrific conflagration.

Government telephones are needed to:

- (1) Protect our forests.
- (2) Render our police force more efficient, and render the crimes of men like the notorious Bill Miner more difficult, and their capture more certain.
- (3) To make life safer in country districts by enabling the inhabitants to summon assistance either from the doctor or each other, when required.
- (4) To render our country districts more attractive, and thereby counteract the steady drift of the population towards the cities.
- (5) To enable the farmers to co-operate more successfully.

The following is an outline of a telephone scheme for our Province:—

The Government should put a telephone line along each public road, with free public stations at suitable points.

The Government should also supply free wire and the necessary instruments to any responsible property holder who desired to connect with the system; wire and instruments so given to be installed under the supervision of the Government telephone manager.

The whole telephone system should be paid for by our taxes which should be increased for that purpose. This would be fairer than making each person who had the telephone installed pay a rent for it, as under the leasing system numbers would use the telephone who did not pay. Paying by taxation would also result in great economy of administration, and in this way we pay for our public roads. No one would like to be charged a monthly rent for his use of the public highways, nor did toll gates prove a success.

The Disappointed Fruit Growers.

There has recently been held in Victoria a convention of fruit growers, packers, dealers, etc., who have met with representatives of the Government and the great transportation companies to consider the condition of the "Fruit Industry," and the possibility of taking action to improve the situation.

We are growing splendid fruit, probably as a province the best in the world, but the growers have often found it unprofitable to handle their crop and many men are already greatly discouraged.

From the debates in the conference, it was apparent that the transportation companies are not the cause of the trouble: their charges may and probably should be reduced, and they might provide more facilities, but on the whole they do their work well and economically. They are monopolies, but whilst they make large profits, they also have to do all they can to encourage the producer, for without him their plant would be of no more use than scrap iron.

The railway and express charges by no means bridge over the vast gulf betwixt the prices that the producer receives for his fruit and the price that the consumer will willingly pay. Tons of fruit went

to waste in the Okanagan that would have been eagerly bought up in the North-West at very high prices. If only it could have been got there, and properly distributed, the transportation charges would not have proved the least hardship.

The representatives of various packing houses argued that it was the fault of the growers, and that they have been at all times prepared to pay spot cash for the crops, and there is no reason to doubt their statements.

Various motions were brought in asking for increase of the duty, and more thorough inspection (what might be called a vindictive inspection) of imported fruits. Doubling the duty would, in my opinion, by no means settle the question. We are preparing to grow fruit for the British and Australian markets. In the face of that fact, can any mere increase of duty or enforcement of the "Trades Mark Act" really relieve the situation?

Our methods of marketing the fruit are behind the times, and it is in reaching the consumer that we growers fail. We employ methods that are clumsy and antiquated,—there is a lack of system and therefore an immense waste of effort.

An attempt was recently made to organize the various Fruit Growers' Associations into a "Central Exchange," and the idea was a thoroughly good and sound one. The attempt has failed disastrously, and an effort is being made to discredit co-operation

and to eulogize the Joint Stock Company. Would those who oppose Government and co-operative enterprise consider that joint stock management was forever discredited because the United States Government are succeeding in carrying a vast work,—the Panama Canal—to completion where a Joint Stock Company disastrously failed.

We must organize our fruit growing industry into a great monopoly, so that we can economically and scientifically market our products. We must conduct this monopoly in the interests of both the producers and the consumers, and it will be far more easy to manage the monopoly than a number of independent unions or a lot of Joint Stock Companies.

The independent companies (if truly independent) will ship the fruit to the various markets, glutting some and starving others. If truly independent and competitive, they will have to give credit to obtain trade, and they will make bad debts which the consumers and the producers will have to bear between them, as these debts will be part of the business expense. All experience shows that the Joint Stock Companies will not compete, but will combine for their protection and profit, and to fleece both the consumer and producer, therefore the choice is not between competition and monopoly, but between a private monopoly existing like the "Standard Oil Company" for the benefit of its shareholders, and a public monopoly run in the public interest.

I would urge our fruit growers and farmers generally to think seriously of these problems. By no mere system shall we establish a useful plan of co-operation: it is the true spirit of mutual trust as well as active personal interest that is needed, and above all, honesty. It was dishonesty amongst some of the growers and some of the officials, and the distrust and suspicion that this created, and which was carefully exploited by interested parties, which brought the "Central Exchange" to ruin.

The curse of the age is the immense number of parasitic individuals that have succeeded in foisting themselves on the backs of the real producers of wealth. Our miners, fishermen, farmers and manufacturers have to carry this vast crowd of unnecessary agents.

We call incessantly for capital, but when we get it and it has come to our Province in vast quantities of late, we sink it in town sites and lands, or fritter it away in crazy speculations. For instance much of the labor that should be ministering directly to human necessities is wasted in surveying lands all over the Province, and then in trying to dispose of these lands, therefore we still import vast quantities of farm products that we should grow ourselves.

Let the producers keep a sharp look-out on all these smart gentlemen who live so well and do so little. I know that many of them are tremendously busy and marvellously clever at getting for them-

selves the best products of human skill. But let us ask ourselves "why" and "how" they are able to appropriate to themselves a considerable quantity of our fruit, potatoes, ores, fish, etc.

A great political economist once lived who said: "If any would not work neither should be eat." Perhaps he had no notions of capital, and no proper appreciation of modern business methods, but it seems to me that his saying probed right down into the foundations of human society.



